



YOUR ENERGY CONNECTION



From the Desk of the City Manager

Over the past year, the price of energy and fuel have progressively increased across the nation, resulting in higher gasoline and energy costs. Accordingly, the additional expense of higher winter heating costs is causing some customers to have difficulty paying their utility bills.

Locally, many customers took steps to implement cost saving strategies in their homes to lessen the impact of the forthcoming increases. Despite their efforts, many utility bills still are higher than normal.

While the City Council and staff have worked to minimize the impact of rising energy costs through cost mitigating measures, we have not been able to avoid the rate increases. The approved rate increases that have been passed to our customers reflect only the higher cost of electricity and gas to the City.

During the winter, when it may become difficult to pay the bills or to pay them promptly, fixed income families and the elderly often are the hardest hit and sometimes are forced into arrears. For such situations, we want to be certain all possibilities for sustaining utilities have been exhausted for these families with the hope of not causing any additional hardships.

Key items to remember are:

- Customers having trouble paying their utility bills may visit the Utility Business Office or call the office at 972-1250 for assistance in working out a solution in advance.
- Customer service representatives are available to talk with customers and try to assist them with a reasonable payment arrangement.
- Customer service representatives will direct customers to options, provisions and assistance that may be available to them.
- If a customer is already on an arranged payment plan, it is important to adhere to the agreement.
- Special agency assistance may be available for seniors, disabled or persons recently laid off to pay winter heating costs. Customers should inform customer service representatives if they believe they qualify for special hardship considerations.
- All customers are eligible for one free meter re-read per year.
- Home repair and renovation assistance is available for eligible low income homeowners.
- Delinquent accounts are reviewed weekly prior to scheduled disconnections. Attempts are made to contact customers by telephone and, if the attempt is unsuccessful, a card is left at the location. If certain conditions exist, the account is held for additional notification.

Maintaining utility services is crucial during the colder winter months, especially for younger and older residents. We encourage all customers to take steps to conserve, to call early if you are concerned about paying your bill, and to consider the various payment options that include pay arrangements, budget billing and account drafts.

- Stephen Raper, City Manager

BEAT THE PEAK

“Peak” or “Peak Demand” is the greatest amount of electricity used at one time by an electric system, normally when a large number of customers are using appliances at the same time. By controlling the electric load or load management, we can keep electric costs in control. Rocky Mount averages approximately less than 10 days per month load managing. There are several options available:

Electric Water Heater Control-

Water heaters are cycled off during load management periods. Controlling water heaters will not affect the amount of hot water available. Customers receive **\$2.00** credit each month.

Electric Heat Strip Control-

Heat strips are controlled during the winter load management periods, while compressors continue to provide heat. Customers receive **\$15.00** credit each month if the temperature falls to 25 degrees or below on a non-holiday weekday.

Central Air Conditioning Total Control-

Customers receive **\$20.00** credit each month for July, August, and September. The credit is calculated based on yearly consumption. The compressor is turned off for the entire load management period. Fans will continue to circulate the cool air in your house, but your compressor will not generate any new cool air.

There are no installation or maintenance charges associated with this program.

**Call 972-1283 for more information .
Start your savings now!**



North Carolina One Call

If you are planning to dig on your property, call the North Carolina One-Call at **1-800-632-4949** at least two working days in advance to find out if there are underground lines you need to avoid. The NC One-Call Center operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year.

Your call starts the ball rolling:

1. Utilities with underground lines near the site are notified
2. Utilities mark underground lines with flags and paint
3. Color-coded flags or paint mark the area:
 - **Red = Electric**
 - **Yellow = Gas, oil, or steam**
 - **Orange = Telephone, television, or other communication lines**
 - **Blue = Water**
 - **Green = Sewer**
 - **Pink = Temporary survey marking**
 - **White = Proposed excavation**

This one phone call could save you from disrupted service, expensive repairs, or personal injury.

Tree Seedling Giveaway

The City of Rocky Mount will hold its annual tree seedling giveaway in the Atrium of City Hall beginning March 6th until all trees are given away.

This year's selections include a Goldenrain Tree and a Flowering Crab Apple Tree. Both trees provide abundant color. Both trees are acceptable to plant near power lines but as always it is best not to plant these trees under power lines.

The Flowering Crab Apple will grow from 15 to 25 feet with a moderate to fast growth rate. It blooms in the spring with masses of single, semi-double or double flowers, light pink or nearly white, that sometimes have a musky, sweet scent. This tree produces a small apple-like fruit. It grows best in full sun exposure with moderate to regular watering.

The Goldenrain Tree will grow 20 to 35 feet with a slow to moderate growth rate. It blooms in early summer with 8 to 14 inch long golden yellow flower clusters. This tree also produces a fruit. It resembles a capsule that is red when young and matures to brown sometimes resembling a Chinese lantern. It grows best in full sun exposure with moderate to regular watering.

City representatives will be available in the Atrium to assist customers with their tree seedlings. Come early to make sure you receive your seedlings. Supplies diminish quickly. Call 972-1281 if you have questions.